assistance to the State Govts/U.T. Govts. for the development of tourist infrastructure including construction of tourist complex, way-side amenities, Yatri Niwas etc. and encouraging private investment in the tourism sector including hotels by providing various incentives like tax exemption, interest subsidy, concessional custom duty on import, etc. During the year 1998-99, 298 projects/schemes have been identified for an amount of Rs. 7887.02 Lakhs for the development of infrastructure facilities.

Arrival of Tourists in North-Eastern States

1345. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of foreign tourists who visited the tourist places of the country particularly the NE States during the last three years;

(b) the total amount of foreign exchange earned therefrom; and

(c) the steps being taken to expand tourist facilities to the visitors of NER?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTHKUMAR): (a) Total number of foreign tourists who visited India during the last three years is as follows:

Year	Actual Foreign Tourist Arrivals (Million)
1997	2.37
1998	2.36
1999	2.48

According to the statistics available from the State Governments, the estimated number of foreign tourists who visited the NE States for the last three years is as follows:

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals in North Eastern States
1997	12289
1998	12413
1999	13084

(b) The estimated foreign exchange earnings from tourism during the last three years is as follows:

Year	Estimated Foreign Exchange Earnings (Rs. in crores)
1997	10725.64
1998	11540.25
1999	12498.93

(c) Various steps have been taken to expand tourist facilities include Central financial assistance to the North Eastern States for the development of tourist infrastructure including Budget Accommodation, Wayside amenities, Pilgrim centres etc. An amount of Rs. 3573.04 lakhs has been sanctioned during the year 1998-99 for the development of tourism in the North Eastern States.

Pending tourism projects

1346. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the State-wise list of tourism projects sent by various states for approval during the last two years;

(b) the number of projects approved together with financial assistance provided in each projects; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to exploit tourism potential in the country to the maximum extent?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTHKUMAR): (a) and (b) State-wise list of tourism projects for various States during the last 2 years is given in the Statement (*See* below)

(c) During 1999-2000, over 600 projects for an amount of Rs. 20,600.89 lakhs have been prioritised for development of tourism in consultation with the State/UT Governments.

Statement

List of tourism projects received and financial assistance sanctioned to various States during the year 1997-1998 and 1998-99

(Rs. in lakhs)

	1997-98		1998-99	
State	No. of projects sanctioned	Amount Sanctioned	No. of projects sanctioned	amount Sanctioned
Andhra Pradesh	12	206.70	10	244.08
Assam	12	288.88	9	348.10